Among the rules under review in 2006 is the local television ownership limit. Currently, the rule states that a "single entity may own two television stations in the same local market if (1) the so-called 'Grade B' contours of the stations do not overlap; or (2) at least one of the stations in the combination is not ranked among the top four stations in terms of audience share and at least eight independently owned and operating commercial or non-commercial full-power broadcast television stations would remain in the market after the combination." In addition the rule does allow an entity to own two stations in a market with 17 or fewer and three stations in a market with 18 or more.

I believe that by allowing an entity to own more local stations and by removing restrictions on allowing them to own multiple stations in the top four in a local market, local television will be better suited to act in the public interest, which at this time includes not only news coverage but entertainment as well. By allowing entities to own more local stations, it can be reasonably assumed that larger companies with more money will likely purchase the smaller stations, concentrating the stations within that market. One of the largest concerns of this kind of large company domination in local markets is expressed by Ben H. Bagdikian in The Media Monopoly, where he claims that alliances and mergers that lead to "excessive market domination" reduce competition. But, as Janet Kolodzy points out in her article "Media convergence is an opportunity, not a curse," printed in the Columbia Journalism Review, "the issue isn't who owns the media; it's what those owners do with it."

Broadcast stations would likely be more diverse if restrictions were taken off the amount that one company may own in a single market. Independently owned stations in a local market are already at a disadvantage because they do not have the same amount of money to spend as stations owned by large companies. In order to stay in business the independent stations are forced to try and keep up with stations owned by large companies, and come up with programming aimed at the larger lowest-common-denominator market (the same market that large company owned stations are aimed at). When large company owned stations continue to aim at this market, because they view it solely as a business, and independent stations aim at the same market just to try and stay in business, programming lacks diversity. But, if “excessive market domination” were allowed, as it would be if current restrictions were reduced, the large company stations would no longer have to worry about competition from independent stations and would be able to target markets that are not currently targeted. They would still be able to devote one of their top stations in that local market to the lowest-common-denominator audience, but would be able to take other stations that they own in that same market and aim at certain niche audiences which are currently overlooked except on cable channels.

Another main concern of the large companies controlling local media markets is a lack of news coverage that really matters to the people. Robert W. McChesney and John Nichols wrote in “Up in Flames” that when a single company controls media outlets in a single market that they market is going to get a “one-size-fits-all news that is a lot more likely to serve the people in power that it is the public interest and democracy.” McChesney and Nichols point out that these companies make large profits but say that they don’t have the money to cover the local news that matters to many people. Right now, it is true that many of the large company owned stations do not provide as much local news coverage as independent local stations do, because they don’t have to. The explicit demand from the public has not been there because they do have the local stations to cover it. If the larger companies do control the local markets, and there are no longer any independent local stations to cover that news, then they likely will begin to cover more of the local news that the public wants, because that demand will be there and it would not be an economically wise choice for a company not to meet the demands of its public.

Lack of local news on the broadcast stations can be attributed to other media that Americans look to for their news. Coverage of news on the internet, radio, cable TV and through newspapers has lessened the need for television to provide news to its public. According to the Pew Research Center in a study released in June of 2004, the younger audience is turning more and more towards cable news outlets for their news coverage (currently 30%). The same study also found that 42% of Americans still look to newspapers for their news, 40% to radio, and 29% to online news sources. With the internet still a fairly new source of news, it seems likely that the number of Americans who look to online sources for their news will only increase.

Having grown up in the Chicago land area, and now going to school in the Quad Cities area, I have seen firsthand the news and programming on owned and operated stations (Fox, NBC, CBS in Chicago), and affiliate stations (Fox, NBC, CBS in the Quad Cities). It is my experience that the news coverage and programming on the owned and operated stations in the Chicago land area is better than that of the affiliate stations, and better than that of the independent stations in the market. This reflects what Bagdikian says in The Media Monopoly, that there have been positive changes in the news reporting of large companies, and that television in the "new mass media" provides "stunning presentations of drama and history, as well as agreeable entertainment." I have noticed, however, that on the affiliate stations in the Quad Cities, the news they cover is often more local than the news covered by the owned and operated stations in Chicago, but I did not see this as a negative affect. Even in a large market like Chicago, it seemed that more people turned to the radio or the newspapers for their news, not the TV. I think that this is the case for two reasons. First, most of the time that people have for news comes in the morning between six and nine o'clock, and at night between four and seven, which also happen to be the times that commuters spend in their car. It just becomes easier for them to listen to the news on the radio in their car than to sit down and watch the news before or after work. Second, many people turn to reading the newspaper during their lunch break, while sitting at their desk, or on their morning commute (using public transportation). It is also easier for someone to look at the internet during the workday to get news than it is for them to watch TV.

While some claim that relaxing restrictions on the local ownership limits and allowing for an entity to own more than one station in the top four stations may lead to "excessive market domination" and a lack of diversity on the air, I believe that not allowing companies to own more stations in a market will lead to a lack of diversity. Large companies that own broadcast stations are often criticized for having too much of a business approach, but smaller companies must also have a business approach, or they will no longer be able to broadcast. By letting larger companies own more stations, they would then have the money to bring new and more narrowly aimed programming and viewpoints to target the smaller niche audiences better than the smaller companies and increase diversity on television.